

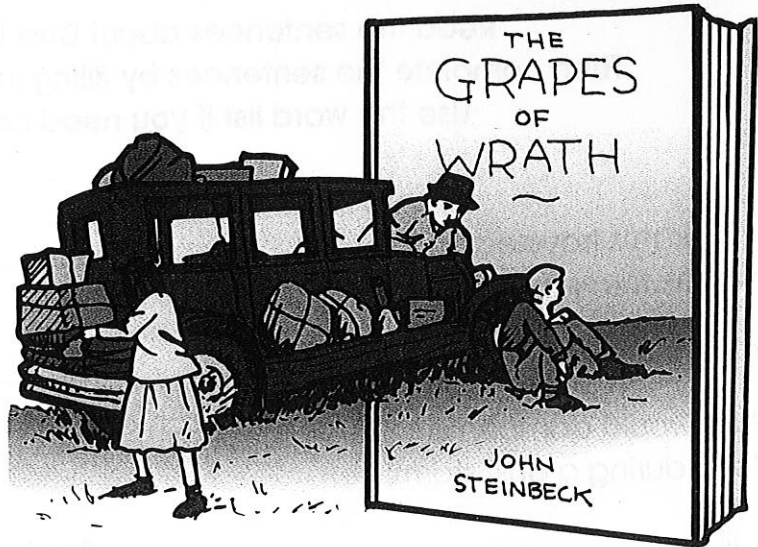
The Dust Bowl

Beginning in 1934, dust storms struck across the Midwest. Huge clouds darkened the sky, and dirt and dust blew in and coated everything. Dust clouds even blew as far east as New York City and Washington, D.C. People closed up their houses and covered the windows with wet blankets, but still the dust seeped in, stopping up machinery, coating hair and skin, dirtying everything. In the western plains states of Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, and Kansas the storms were so common that the area was nicknamed the "Dust Bowl."

The Dust Bowl was partly the result of an extended drought (years of very little rain) and high temperatures. Another reason for the Dust Bowl, though, was that farmers were plowing up the soil without knowing how to preserve the land. Many of these farmers were homesteaders who received small farms from the government after the turn of the century. They planted wheat because it needed little rain and few workers for harvesting, but the roots of the wheat did not hold the soil well. Most farmers did not bother to plant trees, and they burned stubble (stalks that remain after harvest) to the ground. All these factors led to dry, dusty soil that would easily blow whenever a dry spell came.

The Dust Bowl gave birth to a huge migration of farm families. Many people simply gave up their land, piled their possessions on a car or truck, and headed west. Because many of these people were from Oklahoma, they were nicknamed "Okies." Poor and largely uneducated, most Okies could find work only in the California migrant labor camps, harvesting vegetables, fruit, and cotton.

The government responded to the Dust Bowl by creating the Soil Conservation Service. This organization educated farmers about farming methods that would protect the soil and harmonize with the climate.



Dorothea Lange's photographs and John Steinbeck's novel helped show the nation the plight of the Okies.

Read the sentences about Dust Bowl.
Then complete the sentences by filling in each blank.
Use the word list if you need help.

- ★ Most migrants traveled _____ after dust storms struck their farms.
- ★ A prolonged dry spell is called a _____.
- ★ A settler would dampen a _____ to cover his windows during a dust storm.
- ★ The Soil _____ Service taught farmers to save soil.
- ★ The nickname given to migrants from Oklahoma was _____.
- ★ The Grapes of Wrath was an important _____ that helped show the plight of migrant workers.
- ★ Small farmers who got land from the government were known as _____.
- ★ The famous photographer, Dorothea _____, took pictures of migrant workers.
- ★ Dust storms destroyed this essential farm resource: _____.
- ★ The western plains states of Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, and _____ were nicknamed the Dust Bowl.